



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0329NC-1 for Dr. Eric J. Becoats

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Durham Public Schools (DPS) is building on a strong base of state and district work in the four assurance areas. DPS does a reasonably good job of outlining the work done thus far by the state and district. In the the area of standards and assessments the state has adopted the Common Core standards and a state Next Generation model for assessment and accountability which DPS clearly sees as a guiding star for its reforms. In the area of data, the district appears to have and use significant varieties and types of school and individual performance data. It has an on-going initiative on Assessment for Learning to build capacity for formative assessment; it has robust school report cards, a data dashboard, and myriad other data reports. In addition, the district is poised to be able to use a new Instructional Improvement System being developed by the State under RTT which will provide access to a range of performance data and associated tools and supports. In the area of low performing schools it has implemented the state's tiered intervention strategy and has undertaken two school transformations under the Titledei I school turnaround grants - both with some success. Finally, the district has invested in strengthening its work force.</p> <p>However, while the district describes this strong base on which to build, it does not set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision in its application. Neither in this section or elsewhere in the application does the district explain in any detail how the components of its proposed initiative, iChoose, build on prior work to produce improved results or fit together in a comprehensive approach. Nor does the district make a strong case for how the initiative would deepen student learning, personalize student support, allow students to address their academic interests, or are grounded in common and individual tasks. Unfortunately, the descriptions of iChoose read more as a list of discrete initiatives for one school feeder pattern - none of which are particularly innovative or clearly designed to have long-term district wide impact.</p> <p>Given these strengths and weaknesses, a rating at the low end of the mid-range is appropriate.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>DPS has selected 9 schools to participate. They have made what appears to be a reasonable strategic decision to anchor their initiative around Southern High School, one of the district's lowest performing high schools. The 9 schools participating are in the high school feeder pattern or are geographically close elementary schools. These schools are among the schools with greatest need in DPS. They all have fairly high percentages of high need students. In addition to the high school, two elementary schools have been identified as among the state and district's lowest performing schools. Two additional elementary schools and the participating middle school have been identified as priority schools under the state's rating system. Collectively, the selected schools serve 5,512 students and have 385 educators.</p> <p>While DPS has proposed a reasonable set of schools to work with, it has not explained how this approach of using a feeder pattern plus additional elementary schools will support high quality LEA and school level implementation. For example, the district organizes its oversight of schools by grade levels, with area superintendents overseeing elementary, middle and secondary schools. The district does not describe how work across this set of 9 schools will be coordinated, how they might be connected in a learning community, or how the various central office staff responsible for supporting participating schools will coordinate. For this reason, this is a mid-range response.</p>		

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2
(A)(3) Reviewer Comments: <p>While the district has considered the issue of scaling iChoose, the district has not presented a high quality plan for how the reform proposal will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools.</p> <p>In its proposal the district describes its regular operating procedures, including its “plan-do-check-act” continuous improvement model, its project management practices, and the roles and responsibilities of key central office staff and offices that are relevant to iChoose. While all of these practices and organizational structures appear to be well-implemented and effective, DPS does attempt to show how they will be utilized to scale up the reforms. DPS provides no timelines, activities, or deliverables regarding scaling up. DPS does state that it has created a logic model to support the adaptation of the project to other schools. While the logic model might be helpful to schools that want to implement iChoose, there is no discussion of how the district would support, allocate resources, or otherwise promote adaptation by other schools beyond a two-page written logic model.</p> <p>For these reasons, this is a low-rated response.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	4
(A)(4) Reviewer Comments: <p>DPS has set ambitious goals. For student performance, their goals are to reduce the percent of non-proficient students by one-half in reading and math by subgroup. This will require, for example, overall proficiency in K-8 reading to rise from 59.8 to 85.2 percent by SY2016-17 and overall proficiency in K-8 math to rise from 75.5 to 90.1 by SY2016-17. They have set similarly ambitious goals for decreasing the achievement gap and increasing the graduation. DPS and North Carolina are to be commended for having data on both college attendance and 5 year college graduation rates for students who attend a University of North Carolina system institution. DPS's goals for increasing those rates are also ambitious.</p> <p>However, DPS has not effectively made the case either in their response to (A)(4) or elsewhere in their application that their vision is likely to result in achievement of these goals, calling into question whether the goals are "achievable". DPS shares in graphic and list form the components of iChoose, including summer academies, summer bridge academies, Cybraries with digital and on-line resources, data analysts, parent advocates, etc... Each of these elements may be appropriate and useful. However, it does not explain how these separate pieces come together in powerful ways at the classroom and school level to improve performance. Moreover, in responding to (A)(4), DPS shares a range of worthy on-going district activities and strategies (e.g. Board adopted Theory of Action and Strategic Plan, Design for Accelerated Progress, Assessment for Learning and Area Support team model) but does not show how they connect to the vision of iChoose.</p> <p>In summary, because DPS has set ambitious goals but has not demonstrated that their vision is likely to result in achieving these goals this response merits a score in the mid-range..</p>		

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>In its application, despite some positive data, DPS does not convincingly demonstrate a record of success in all three areas of (B)(1).</p> <p>DPS shows impressive school-wide achievement gains in both reading/English and math in the 9 schools proposed for the iChoose initiative. For example, Southern HS moved from 22.2% proficient in reading and 44.9% proficient in math in SY2008-</p>		

9 to 52.3% and 58.7% proficient in SY11-12. However, DPS does speak to any evidence of its track record in increasing graduation and college going rates or closing achievement gaps. Nor does it provide any LEA-wide data of success.

In the area of low achieving schools, DPS has clearly made progress. DPS went from 9 low performing schools (as defined under the state accountability system) in 2007-08 to none in 2011-12, suggesting considerable progress. While two DPS schools received SIG grants and undertook the transformation model in 2011, DPS provides no information about the quality of implementation or results thus far, making it impossible to evaluate the presence of "ambitious and significant reforms" in the district's persistently lowest-achieving schools.

DPS does not provide any evidence that it makes individual student performance data available to students, educators and parents. Its response solely addresses aggregate performance data such as found in school score cards and public data dashboards.

Globally, considering the strong record of success in some areas but the lack of evidence of success in others, this response receives a mid-level rating.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

DPS meets the minimum requirements of (B)(2) by posting all the called for information on salaries and expenditures on its website. In addition, DPS appears to make LEA processes and practices through in strategic plan, theory of action, school report cards and other vehicles. However, there is no evidence of transparency regarding LEA investments other than the minimum required here. Thus, this response receives a high, but not perfect, rating.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

In its application, DPS describes North Carolina's strong and successful legislation and policies to support high school innovation and reform. North Carolina clearly has adopted a range of policies supportive of innovation and reform, particularly at the high school level.

However, beyond a general summary of state policies, DPS has not attempted to demonstrate that the state provides the conditions and autonomy to allow DPS to successfully execute the specific strategies that compose iChoose (summer support programs, transition classes for struggling students, parent advocates, digital learning resources in school libraries to be renamed Cybraries, or data analysts).

Despite the lack of positive evidence that there is not conflict, on its face there is no reason to think that the strategies proposed would be in conflict with state requirements. Moreover, the SEA letter supporting the application does not indicate any concerns regarding policy conflicts.

As a result, this response receives a mid-range rating.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	3
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

DPS reached out to principals and teachers for input in the development of the proposal, meeting individually with each principal and then with each school staff to share the opportunity, outline the district's initial plans and get input. The district modified their plan based on this input. For example, DPS added more instructional planning and professional development days based on teacher input. Teachers formally indicated their support at relatively high levels: at three schools between 96 and 100% of teachers supported the proposal; at five schools between 84 and 89% did so; at 1 school 76% of teachers did so.

However, the district provided no evidence of engagement with students and families in the development of the proposal. Nor does the district provide letters of support from stakeholders other than from principals of participating schools. For these reasons, the response receives a medium rating.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)**5****1****(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

DPS provides a fairly lengthy listing (accompanied by short descriptions) of the range of activities across the district that could arguably be considered “personalized learning strategies” and “personalized learning environments.” Personalized learning strategies included Personal Education Plans (state mandated plans for at risk students), student assistance programs, secondary intervention teams, PBIS, and others. Personalized learning environments (defined by DPS as allowing parents and students to pick environments that fit their needs and interests) included magnet schools, non-traditional high schools, International Baccalaureate programs, among others.

While DPS summarized its current status in implementing personalized learning environments (as it defines that term), it did not provide any plan for how it will more carefully analyze the current status and the logic of the proposed strategy in relation to that status or identify needs and gaps. There is no reference to a what goals of an analysis might look like, activities to carry it out, a timeline, deliverables, or parties responsible. Because the response does not address the requirement for an analysis plan, it receives a low rating.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	4

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

DPS plan for personalizing learning and teaching includes several of the elements of (C)(1) in interesting ways. However, the plan does not include many elements (detailed below). Moreover, the plan fails to articulate how the various strategies it does include integrate and reinforce each other in meaningful ways achieve DPS’ goals.

DPS bases its plan for personalized learning on strengthening the instructional core – the intersection of content, student and teacher – and the belief that all three areas must be strengthened simultaneously. In terms of content, DPS embraces the Common Core State Standards, adopted by the state and iChoose and the on-line Instructional Improvement System (IIS) currently being developed by the state as vehicles for strengthening implementation of the Core.

In terms of the interaction of students with content, under iChoose, DPS will transform libraries in participating schools into “Cybraries.” Students will have access to iPads, databases, ebooks loaded with a large selection of readings, cloud-based authoring tools, educational Wixie portals and other digital resources that can be accessed from multiple platforms.

IChoose will also provide summer support to students in need. It proposes: (1) 4 week summer elementary program for students reading below proficient at 3rd grade in each participating school; (2) 4 week summer middle grades “summer bridge” academies for students identified as off-track with the districts early warning system; (3) 4 week summer pre-collegiate academy to increase college access. IChoose also includes transitional classes in each elementary school, as required by state law, for students who have been retained. While not mentioned in the response to (C)(1), DPS also proposes to hire data analysts and parent advocates for each participating school.

The overall impression from the proposal is that DPS, while having a strong approach to instructional overall, has in this application proposed four disconnected strategies that do not combine into a high-quality plan for personalizing learning. First, it intends to augment their libraries with digital resources – but provides no detail or plan about how those resources might be used to transform and personalize student learning experiences and empower student learning in an organized, sustained, coherent strategy. Second, it proposes summer learning experiences for subsets of students in need, with no explanation of how these summer programs will make use of investments in Cybraries or further personalize learning in the ways called for by RTT-D. Third, it proposes data analysts to help schools better use data for instructional improvement, with little connection

between the data analyst role, the digital library experience or summer programs. Fourth, it proposes parent advocates, but doesn't connect their roles to any of the other three strategies.

In addition, there are a number of elements of (C)(1) that DPS does not address in its application. DPS' proposal does not show how students will:

- understand that what they are learning is key to success
- identify and pursue learning and development goals, or understand how to structure and monitor their learning
- be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of interest
- have access to diverse cultures, contexts, perspectives
- develop skills and traits such as team work, goal setting, problem-solving.

Nor is there any discussion of how students will have access to:

- personalized sequences of content and skill development
- On-going and regular feedback
- Accommodations for high need students
- Training and support for students to use tools and resources provided

Because DPS's response to this element of the application fails to address the majority of the components called for and the plan it does present does not reach the level of a high quality plan for improving learning and teaching, this element merits a low rating.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

4

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In their response this element of the application focused on the district plan to improve teaching and leading by personalizing the learning environment, DPS summarizes their existing approach to professional development and growth, which is laid out in detail in their district professional development strategy. The district focuses Professional Development in three areas: teaching and assessment for learning; culturally responsive classrooms; and performance management/talent development. The proposal also describes the state-wide teacher and principal evaluation system. Finally, the proposal states that DPS uses Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as the vehicle for fostering teacher development and engagement and proposes to include data analysts to be hired under this grant in each PLC in order to disaggregate data by subgroup and course objective.

This generic description of current practices fails to address key elements of (C)(2). It does not address how educator training and development proposed in iChoose (or current district activities) will support their capacity to:

- Effectively personalize instruction
- Adapt content and instruction in response to individual students needs and interests
- Use data to inform acceleration of student progress or improvement of educator practice
- Use feedback of educator evaluations to improve practice

Nor does the proposal address how educators will have access to the following resources called for by RTT-D:

- Actionable information that helps identify optimal learning approaches for each individual student
- Processes and tools to match student needs with resources and approaches

Finally, the proposal does not address how it would increase the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

Because the proposal fails to address most of elements called for by the application, this element receives a low rating.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	4
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>DPS does not propose any organizational changes in the central office to support participating schools. While that may be appropriate, it is worth noting that the participating schools are supported by three different area superintendents. It is not clear whether they are also supported by different area support teams. DPS does not describe how work across this set of 9 schools will be coordinated, how they might be connected in a learning community, or how the various central office staff responsible for supporting participating schools will coordinate. One strength of its current organization is school support teams, which include counselors, social workers, academic facilitators, technology specialists, gradation coaches, special education coordinators, and other specialists, and will assist area superintendents in supporting schools.</p> <p>DPS states that it can provide schools with the flexibility needed to implement its proposal. This seems likely since no changes in schedules, staffing patterns, course design, or school structures are proposed to implement iChoose.</p> <p>In its response, DPS does not make clear whether students can progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. It indicates that it can "move students based on mastery" but whether it can award credit is unknown. It also does not address whether it provides students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways. The iChoose summer school could provide one such opportunity, although that is not clear from the proposal and no other methods of demonstration are put forward. Finally, DPS does not address adaptability and accessibility of resources.</p> <p>Because of these strengths and weaknesses, this element receives a mid-level rating.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>Based on the forthcoming IIS system developed by the state, DPS' on-going Teaching and Learning Technology Refresh Project to provide schools with access to digital resources, and the proposed iChoose initiative, participating students (and their parents) and teachers would appear to have access to a wide variety of digital learning and teaching resources both in and out of school.</p> <p>DPS appears to have a reasonable approach to providing technical support – although increased use of digital learning may increase demands for support. The district currently has a tiered approach to providing technical support, including a call center. DPS also has on-site technology champions at each school.</p> <p>DPS fails to address the requirement regarding exporting information in an open data format and the requirement regarding interoperable data systems.</p> <p>Due to this mixed assessment, this selection criteria receives a mid-level rating.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>DPS proposes a traditional and reasonable approach to continuous improvement. It plans to hire an external evaluator to conduct an evaluation with both summative and formative elements. The evaluator would provide feedback to a project manager who oversees iChoose as well as to an iChoose advisory committee and district leaders to inform any mid-course</p>		

corrections and improvements. Reports and information would also be provided to parents, district staff and the public in the standard ways.

In addition, DPS states that data analysts hired under iChoose would assist the evaluator in collection of a range of data, including student performance, parent, teacher and volunteer data and data on implementation of Personal Education Plans. Analysts would not only give this data to the evaluator but also help teacher professional learning communities use data effectively. Using school-based data analysts to help drive a continuous improvement strategy is attractive since they are close to the data and to teachers, principals and students who should be learning and adjusting based on the data. However, it is not clear from the proposal how the data being collected by data analysts relates to iChoose or how it would be used in PLCs to drive improvements in personalization, achievement and the iChoose implementation. Moreover, given the variety of digital learning and assessment programs that would be available through cybraries and other proposed interventions, one would expect to see more explicit attention to tracking student and teacher use of digital learning and supporting teachers and students in using data generated by these technologies to improve individual learning and school-level practices.

Overall, with the caveats above, DPS presents a fairly solid plan for continuous improvement but is lacking in a few important regards, thus warranting a rating at the high end of the mid-level.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Selection criteria asks for strategies for on-going communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders in the service of efforts to continuously improve the district's plan over time as circumstances change. DPS lays out a fairly typical one-way communication strategy; the evaluator and central office get the data and determine the message and send it out to others to receive. The one exception is the iChoose Advisory Committee (which does not have a prominent role in the proposal outside this section on continuous improvement), which will provide feedback to the project manager on needed changes to respond to data and evaluation findings. The proposal does not describe any other meaningful mechanisms for engaging and gathering substantive input from teachers, principals, students, parents and other stakeholders to inform modifications of the district's plan over time. For this reason, a mid-range rating is warranted.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

DPS proposes to use its approved AMOs as its required academic performance measures. To meet the requirements that districts propose an "academic leading indicator: (grades 4-12); non-cognitive growth (PK-3); and health or social emotional leading indicator (grades 4-12), DPS proposes to use its Early Warning Tracking System, which considers attendance, grades and academic engagement. Presumably it intends that the early warning measure be an academic leading indicator and a non-cognitive/social-emotional measure at all grade levels since it does not propose a separate non-cognitive (PK-3) or health or social-emotional indicator (grades 4-12), rather claiming without providing evidence that the early warning tracking system meets the requirements for such an indicator. In the area of effective teachers and leaders, DPS states that it can not provide measures since NC has not yet collected baseline data.

For all its proposed indicators, DPS proposes ambitious yet achievable targets (other than for FASFA completion where it is, admirably, already at 100%).

While overall the indicators are reasonable (with the caveats noted above), DPS has not made the case that the Early Warning indicator can adequately act as an indicator for social-emotional/non-cognitive outcomes. In addition, it has not addressed the selection criteria regarding a rationale for selecting indicators, or how indicators provide useful information or indicator improvement. The application does not explain how for its district proposed measures they will provide useful information tailored to its proposed plan or how it will review and improve the measure if needed. For these reasons, this response merits response in the low mid-range.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

DPS states that it will hire an evaluator to carry out a cost-effectiveness evaluation of Project iChoose that will look at: (1) which are the most cost-effective ways to achieve performance gains by subgroup and school; and (2) when do the economic benefits outweigh costs. The proposal then describes core aspects of iChoose: Cybrary; data analysts, various summer programs, and transition classes.

The proposal provides no detail about how such an evaluation might be designed or which elements of iChoose it would evaluate. Given the complexity of cost-effectiveness evaluations, especially when multiple interventions are taking place at the same time in all the participating schools, the lack of detail suggests little attention to this element of the proposed plan, thus leading to a mid-range rating.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	3
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>While DPS has provided an overall budget for the project, it has not identified outside sources of funding and provides no rationale for investments and priorities.</p> <p>The overall cost of the iChoose initiative is \$22 million, of which DPS is requesting \$20 million under RTT-D and commits to providing \$2 million from district resources, although the budget materials do not make clear the district funding source. The budget appears to be reasonable and sufficient.</p> <p>The budget's major investments are in technology and related items (\$1.3 million for Cybraries and \$7.6 million for 1-to-1 iPads and infrastructure upgrades), summer programs (approx. \$2 million), data analysts (\$2.2 million) and parent advocates (\$1.9 million). The budget aligns with the proposal. However, the district offers no text along with the budget tables and thus provides no rationale for investments and priorities or identification of what is one-time vs what is operational cost and how they will be sustained.</p> <p>For these reasons, the rating is in the low end of the mid-range.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>DPS has not provided a response to (F)(2) either in the text or in budget tables, and thus a rating of 0 is appropriate.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: <p>DPS has a four year old partnership with the East Durham Children's Initiative (EDCI), which is modeled on the Harlem Children's Zone and aims to alleviate the impact of poverty by providing supports to enable all young people to successfully graduate from high school college and career ready. EDCI partners with 20 organizations to align resources and provide a continuum of services, including home-based parent education, child care, kindergarten readiness, out-of-school learning time, literacy, health, arts, and parent engagement. EDCI supports three of the nine schools proposed for iChoose (one high school, one middle school and one elementary school). At each of these schools it has an EDCI parent advocate who assess each</p>		

school and each family's needs using school and other data, and provide referrals, training, modeling and encouragement (for families and school staff), home visiting, etc.... DPS proposes to work with EDCI to hire and place 11 parent advocates at iChoose schools. Students and families to work with would be identified by the district's early warning system. The initiative would focus on four long-term goals: (1) informing parents; (2) ensuring effective parent-teacher communication; (3) building supportive home environments; and (4) promoting access to community resources.

While the EDCI generally and the parent advocate initiative in particular appear well-designed, evidence-based, and focused on meaningful goals that clearly relate to student success, the applicant does not provide any data about the success of these initiatives thus far, thus weakening the case for expansion to additional schools. Nor does the applicant explain how the work of the Parent Advocates in iChoose schools would connect to or enhance other components of iChoose, such as summer programs, Cybraries, etc....rather than acting as a stand-alone program in these schools.

DPS makes the case that parent advocates as well as an evaluator would track a range of critical data and use that data to target resources and improve results over time. Presumably this would include data on progress toward the four goals above, although that is not clearly stated. However, it does not show how it will track progress toward each goal for each student nor how it will do so at the aggregate level for the district as a whole.

Regarding scaling the initiative beyond participating students, the partnership discusses refining and disseminating the model based on lessons learned, but there appears to be no concrete plan with resources attached for actually do so.

Regarding building staff capacity, the proposal explains how new parent advocates will be trained in the approaches and protocols used currently by EDCI. These are generally aligned with the requirements of (5)(a)-(e). However the application does not provide significant detail about each element, nor does it speak to any training and support for other school staff.

DPS identifies 9 performance measures for this initiative. While most appear appropriate (e.g. student truancy, community referrals, discipline incidents) and have ambitious yet achievable targets (e.g. no more than 5% of targeted students miss more than 6 days of school), some are process measures that are far short of "ambitious" (e.g. 11 parent advocates trained, 75% of targeted families assigned to a parent advocate; 5 parent trainings held per school).

Considered globally, this proposal has some significant strengths (e.g., expanding an existing partnership with EDCI and 20 agencies and organizations; build on prior parent advocate work; aim for a few, fairly clear goals) as well as significant weaknesses (e.g. no evidence of prior success of EDCI, no clear linkages to other aspects of iChoose; no concrete plan for scaling). Thus, this response receives a mid-level rating.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Looking at the proposal in its totality, it has met this absolute priority. DPS has a strong base of work in the core assurance areas on which to build. It has made college and career ready standards the centerpiece of its instructional improvement efforts. It proposes to personalize learning through access to digital learning tools available in and out of school, more effective use of data at the school level, summer learning opportunities for students in need, and parent advocates to engage parents in their children's education. DPS believes that these strategies will lead to improved student performance, including improved graduation rates and decreased achievement gaps. While there are weaknesses in the propoasa that have led to low ratings, the scope and design of the proposal overall show that it has met this priority.

Total	210	78
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0329NC-2 for Dr. Eric J. Becoats

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Applicant has set forth a comprehensive and coherent reform vision that builds on the four core educational assurance area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area 1 Adopting Standards and Assessments - The district, with the support of the state, has adopted the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts & Math. There are clear objectives that all students must meet in all grade levels and areas. In addition, North Carolina has a model of indicators, assessments and accountability to measure student performance and teacher effectiveness. The state framework also includes indicators that "measure performance and growth". There are also indicators for college readiness, graduation rates, and career readiness. • Area 2 Data System - Goals, targets and outcomes have been determined for academic and achievement and other areas including wellness and safety by the state. A state-wide data system is set up to measure progress to the goals. In addition, targets are determined for the district, the schools and each student. School Scorecards are also issued. The data system informs the district's Assessment for Learning Model which provides immediate results of assessments and has an early warning tracking system. Each school has a School Improvement Team that involves the school community in the school improvement plan. An Instructional Improvement System will be implemented that will analyze data, house assessments and student workfiles and portfolios. This system will include assessment strategies and include a professional development tool. • Area 3 Teacher and principal Recruitment - Teacher selection and evaluation is based on multiple measures with the goal of recruiting and retaining great teachers and leaders. • Area 4 Turning Around Low Schools - A plan is in place to turn around low performing schools. The district uses a Support Team Model whose goal is to provide equity and effectiveness in all schools. Schools are organized into tiers of support based on data. The iChoose model of the proposal will accelerate the progress by "providing schools with additional human capital, technology, and instructional resources, supports, and services." The goal is "to personalize the learning environments of students, to engage families, and to assist students in becoming life-long learners who are college and career-ready. <p>This plan is ambitious and achievable. It provides a comprehensive and coherent vision that addresses student achievement, personalization and prepares students for a global society. It includes a comprehensive data management system that will inform students, parents, teachers and educators about progress and will inform instruction and professional development needs. The plan articulates the steps it will take to turn around low-performing schools.</p> <p>Although this section is very strong and comprehensive for the reasons stated above, the selection and evaluation system addressed in Area 3 provides insufficient evidence how administrators/leaders will be selected and evaluated. The multiple measures to select teachers are listed but it is not explained how they will be used. In light of the strengths and only one weakness, I awarded a high score of 9.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	10
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The approach to implementing the proposal will support high-quality district and school-level implementation.</p> <p>Schools selected for implementation represent elementary and middle schools feeding into the lowest performing high school in the city. The high school, Southern High School, was selected because it is one of the district's lowest achieving school and</p>		

is on the state list of Priority Schools due to its graduation rate. All schools are low achieving with high poverty rates. Participating schools have included letters that they understand and agree with the goals of this project.

The data supports the rationale for being selected as a Participating school.

- All students in the participating schools will be included in the implementation and are considered high need.
- 80% of the students in participating schools are low income.
- All educators in the participating schools will be participating.

There were no weaknesses in the section, warranting it a high score of 10.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

10

9

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The plan describes an ambitious but achievable reform plan and has a well thought out plan for scaling up the changes beyond the schools selected. Many pieces of this plan are already in place.

There is a continuous improvement process in place. This process, Plan-Do-Check-Act, will be used at the participating schools and will be scaled up to include all other schools. This process uses Project Management Oversight practices. A charter will be developed for each measurable strategy in the Plan and will include the scope, deliverables, stakeholders, and timelines for projects. An online management system will be used, making this easy to scale up beyond the grant. The Project Manager will oversee the progress in the following areas.

- A Curriculum and Assessment team is in place to oversee the implementation of the CCSS and assessments. This includes professional development to support teachers in creating "a rich learning environment" that helps students master the standards.
- An Instructional Improvement System is in place to provide data collection. A team of data analysts have been hired to support the system.
- Human Resources will oversee teacher and principal evaluations to ensure the recruitment, support, and retention of effective teachers and leaders.

The iChoose Project have selected five goals:

1. Increase academic proficiency for PreK - 12th grade students
2. Increase the percentage of students who graduate ready for college and career
3. Increase the percentage of effective & highly effective teachers and principals
4. Establish a culture and climate that promote effective and positive relationships
5. Enhance & update school libraries to promote personalized learning & literacy

This section demonstrates high quality because it lists goals, activities, deliverables and the responsible parties. It is unclear from the narrative what the timeline will be. Although this is narrative is still strong, I am giving it a 9 because of this.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

10

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Ambitious and achievable and realistic annual goals have been stated. The methodology for determining the goals are appropriate, and the methodology for assessing whether the goals are met is described.

- The plan addresses performance on summative assessments by stating the current proficiency of the schools involved, and of each subgroup. It includes goals for each school and subgroup.
- The goals that are included are to decrease achievement gaps and increase graduation rates.
- Disaggregated data is also included to support the goals of increasing college enrollment

The plan is extensive and has components for supporting students, educators, technology and the community. Teams are set up to provide support and coaching to administrators and teachers. There are formative and summative assessment measures

in place to provide feedback whether goals are being met. Professional Learning communities that foster collaboration are being established.

In order to address graduation rates and achievement gaps, a personalized learning system is being put in place. The system addresses all elementary, middle and high schools and includes technology, extending the school year through summer academies and outreach to parents.

Durham Public schools has developed four theoretical structures to address transformation in the school district.

- The Theory of Action has three components which are aligned to the proposal. The first component is the strongest of the three and is seen throughout the proposal. Focusing on this Theory of Action will result in meeting the plan's goals.
 1. managed curriculum and instructional support
 2. empowerment of teachers and principals
 3. energizing the community and mobilizing resources
- The Design for Accelerated Progress divides school into four tiers, based on performance levels. The four components are:
 1. identifying chronically low-achieving schools that are not likely to achieve drastic improvements without transformative change
 2. setting clear, rigorous standards for district leaders, school administrators and teachers related to significantly improving student performance
 3. providing district support, management, and technical assistance to increase performance outcomes
 4. empowering school leaders and teachers to play an active role in the turnaround
- Area Support Team Model created area support teams that provide one-stop support and service to schools to ensure higher academic gains for all students. They also serve as a link to foster Professional Learning Communities.
- Assessment for Learning model ensures alignment of the standards, classroom instruction and assessment.

These structures are provided by the district to all schools. The proposal for the iChoose schools will add a culture of reform to the current model by building a multifaceted program to accelerate academic outcomes for all students. The project aims to achieve personalized learning environments through the Instructional Improvement System, digital texts and cybraries, transitional classrooms in the elementary schools, summer academies, a bridge academy for middle schools and Pre-Collegiate Academies for high schools, data coaches, and parent advocates.

The proposal seeks to improve on the model presented by the district. The activities are explained along with the group who is responsible to monitor that activity. It is likely that this plan will result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity. The criteria of this section was met and merited a score of ten. No weaknesses were noted. The plan adequately addresses how the proposal will reach areas of Performance on summative assessments, decrease the achievement gap, increase graduation rates and college enrollments.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The proposal provides data that outlines a record of successes in increasing math and reading student outcomes in the participating schools over the last four years. There are no longer any schools in the district that are considered to be low achieving. Last year, 2011-2012, the district met goals on a number of academic measures including grade 3, 5, and 8 end-of-grade scores, end-of-course tests at high schools and graduation rates. The data shows that the district is improving student learning outcomes and closing the achievement gap.</p> <p>The district provides Data Dashboards and School Scorecards. These measures are analyzed and used to inform what is successful and next steps to take. Both the Dashboards and Reportcards are available online and are also available as paper copies. The data is also shared with the media. School Reportcards are included in the Appendix. Providing data in this format</p>		

will inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. These data collections are evidence that the district makes student performance available to students, educators and parents.

The narrative is unclear, in this section, how it will improve student learning outcomes and does not address closing the achievement gap. It does not describe how it will achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its lower-performing schools. This lack of narrative created a score of 10.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

There is some evidence that the proposal demonstrated evidence of transparency in processes, practices, and investments.

Information is available through various mediums, including the Superintendent's annual update, district websites, articles in newspapers and the cable news stations. The Appendix includes actual personnel salaries by school for instructional staff, teachers and non-personnel expenditures.

This section is being awarded three points because the narrative lacks discussion and evidence of the process of transparency. It does not include a description of the extent to which the applicant already makes available the categories of expenditures required. They are included here but it is not known if they are included in the mediums discussed in the section.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The state has a vigorous program for encouraging innovative and autonomous public schools. A school district and one or more college or university may jointly apply to the State Board of Education to establish a cooperative innovative high school program, targeting students who are at risk of dropping out of high school or students in need of accelerated learning programs.

The proposal outlines five personalized learning environments for at-risk students that are available throughout the district and have been authorized by the state. However, these five environments have not been addressed in the iChoose targeted proposal and the narrative does not state how students who are currently in the targeted high school feeder patterns will benefit from these environments described. This section lacks a narrative of how students currently in the targeted high school will be counseled to attend the personalized learning environments and what criteria would be used, so it receives a score of 5.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	5
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The description includes how teachers and principals in participating schools were engaged in providing feedback. Evidence is provided that over 70% of the teachers in the targeted schools support the proposal.

The description lacks a description of how students, families, teachers and principals were engaged in the development of the proposal. Groups met with the executive leadership staff for generating ideas for the grant. The narrative is unclear whether parents, students and teachers were part of this process.

The description does not include how feedback was given by parents and community members. Letters of support are included in the Appendix for the iChoose schools but not from community members. The weaknesses stated of this section earns this area 5 points, instead of 10.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal lists strategies and resources used in the district to meet individual needs and Personalized Learning Environments available throughout the district. It does not review the key goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsible parties who are implementing these environments.

The proposal lacks a description on how these strategies and specialized schools will impact the schools that are targeted in the iChoose group. It is unclear how students in the targeted schools would be referred to the Personalized Learning Environments that are available outside their current school. For this reason, this section received a score of 3.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	10
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The proposal has a plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready.</p> <p>The district and the targeted iChoose schools have adopted and are beginning to implement the Common Core State Standards and the state's college and career ready standards. Teachers will participate in professional learning communities (PLCs) in order to provide the students the needed instruction. The implementation of these rigorous standards are geared to students mastering academic content and critical thinking skills.</p> <p>The targeted schools will be using an Instructional Improvement System that will allow students to measure their continual progress to the standards and the college-ready goals. Parents, students, teachers and district administrators will be able to access data and resources to inform instruction, assessment and career and college goals. The system allows students to take local and statewide assessments and receive instant performance feedback, store a portfolio, collaborate with other students, utilize at-home enrichment, and communicate questions and feedback to teachers and administrators.</p> <p>Students will be using iPads and the Cybrary to experience learning in academic areas they are interested in. The use of technology will allow students to collaborate and conduct internet research. It is unclear how students will access and be exposed to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives other than through the Cybrary.</p> <p>Summer programs are being set up at all three levels as a strategy for high-need students to assure that they are on the track for success. An annual four-week program for 11 and 12th graders is being implemented in order to ensure that all students have access to information needed to attend college and apply for grants. Although the plan addresses the activities it will use in a comprehensive manner, a high-quality plan also addresses goals, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.</p> <p>Although the narrative addresses a great deal about the teaching and learning it does not address some areas asked for in the criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Instructional Improvement System narrative does not address how students understand that what they are learning is a key to the success in accomplishing their goals. It does not state how learning and development goals linked to college and career will be determined by the student. Nor does it tell us how students will be able to structure their learning to achieve and make progress toward their goals. • The narrative does not address how students are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest and have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning. • The plan addresses the adoption of the CCSS but does not discuss how students will master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving. • Students will use an Instructional Improvement System but it doesn't address a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning goals. • This section did not address personalized learning recommendations based on the student's current knowledge and skills, college- and career-ready standards or graduation requirements, and available content, instructional approaches, and supports. Teachers providing time before, during, and after class-time is not enough control over the learning environment. <p>Not including these required points created a deficit in this section, and brought the score down to 10.</p>		

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	15
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district has a comprehensive professional development plan that is aligned to nationally recognized professional development standards. The plan promotes collaboration to strengthen teaching and learning activities. The goals are to increase student achievement and increase the knowledge and skills of the teachers. The activities and strategies listed below will help to meet these goals of educating all students.

- An instructional teaching and assessment framework is used that utilizes data and research-based instructional strategies that focus on personalization of learning in order to be college and/or career ready. The assessments in the framework focus on student learning, but also identify professional development needs. All teachers will have access to, and know how to use tools, data and resources to accelerate student progress.
- The instructional framework and assessments frequently measure student progress toward meeting college and career-ready standards. The framework uses data to inform both the acceleration of student progress and the improvement of teacher practice.
- The district is committed to culturally responsive teaching and learning as an additional strategy to meet the needs of all students.
- A focus on developing effective teachers and administrators by providing standards and research-based professional development is utilized and is expected to grow leadership
- Professional development is available on line, face to face, and through job-embedded coaching.
- Professional Learning Communities meet regularly to focus on data and student learning. Data analysts will join the communities. This is a system and practice that is used to continuously improve student performance and close achievement gaps. Participants are trained in the process of inquiry.
- Teacher and principal evaluations include data to demonstrate student progress to provide students with effective and highly effective teachers. Teachers who do not meet the standards of being effective design a plan for professional growth.

All participating educators will have access to and know how to use the instructional teaching and assessment framework. The data generated from this framework allows teachers to respond to individual student academic needs. The teaching and assessment framework helps identify instructional and professional development needs, ensures mastery of skills by including "instructional strategies that optimize the strengths, interest, and optimal learning styles of all students."

All resources outlines are high quality and are aligned with college and career-ready standards.

It is unclear whether the instructional teaching and assessment framework and the professional learning communities and the research based strategies will focus on providing opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their academic needs, academic interests and optimal learning approaches. The narrative lacks an explanation on how feedback will be provided by the evaluations system on individual and collective effectiveness, as well as how the system provides recommendations, supports and interventions as needed. It also does not address how feedback can affect the professional development plan.

As in the prior section, the plan lists the activities that it will be using. It does address the deliverables and who is responsible. It does not address the goals of each activity for each year, nor does it list timelines. This section is receiving 15 point for the reasons listed in this and the prior paragraph.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	12
<p>(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District has practices, policies and rules that facilitate personalized learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The North Carolina General Statute Section 115C-4 provides autonomy to each school district. There are designated teams that provide support and services to all schools. • The Statute provides school leadership teams in participating schools with flexibility and autonomy over calendar, teaching training, alternative learning programs, and to develop policies and guidelines. <p>From the narrative in other sections, learning resources and instructional practices seem to be adaptable and fully accessible to all students. Unfortunately, this is not addressed in this section. The Learning and Assessment Framework as described in other sections states that the purpose is to increase achievement for all students.</p> <p>It is unclear based on the narrative whether students are given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple ways.</p> <p>This section is receiving 12 points because the narrative does not meet the criteria of a high-quality plan. It again lists activities, deliverables and who is responsible, but fails to discuss goals and timelines for each activity.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	9
<p>(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The state of North Carolina will develop an Instructional Improvement System that will provide "students, parents and educators access to the information and resources they need to personalize their learning environment".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders will have access to the content, tools and learning resources to support the implementation of the proposal. The Instructional Improvement System will be an online system that will provide links between content, assessments and standards. It will house student samples and formative, summative, benchmark and diagnostic assessments. It will include a professional development management tool, and will also have "portal pages" for students, teachers and parents to access. • The state will provide online training to meet the needs of "teachers, parents, and students." A train the trainer model will be used to implement the training. • Parents, educators and students will be provided with "customizable dashboards and reporting tools". Students will also be able to store profiles and work samples. • The system will "provide educators with tools and resources to plan and deliver individualized, enriched, and standards-aligned lessons" along with the ability to provide students and parents access to standards-aligned learning resources. • The proposal addresses that the system will have human resource data, information data and instructional improvement system data. It is unclear whether the system will include budget data about personnel costs, expenditures, and the reasoning behind the use of the funds. <p>This narrative is strong and addresses the first three components clearly. The narrative does not address whether the data system will include budget information as addressed in the last bullet above. To receive a score of ten, the narrative must address all components of the question. The lack of information about budget being on the data system in resulting in a score of 9.</p>		

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The district has a strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback on progress towards goals.

- An independent auditor will be selected to ensure the implementation of a rigorous, continuous improvement process.
- The auditor will provide timely and regular feedback on progress towards project goals.
- The evaluation will take place over the span of the grant and will provide formative and summative feedback for program improvement and determine the impact of the initiative.
- "The evaluation process will focus on how the project is being implemented, how the project is operating, the services it delivers, the functions it performs, and on documenting the decisions made in executing the project."
- The annual summative evaluation will "measure the progress being made toward achieving the goals, objectives and outcomes of the proposal."
- "Reports will be shared regularly with the Project iChoose advisory team, district leadership, parents and the community through various reports and presentations."

Eight data analysts will be hired to assist the evaluator with "the collection of student, teachers, school volunteer, and parent data, while monitoring the implementation of the Personalized Education Plans." These auditors will be able to provide feedback on the goals and provide opportunities for corrections and improvements.

- The analysts will provide feedback to all stakeholders and "support" the Professional Learning Communities to make timely and appropriate decisions about curriculum, assessments and instruction.
- The analysts will provide professional development on on-line platforms

A project manager will be hired and will be responsible for planning, executing, monitoring, and reporting activities in the project. The project manager will also contribute to the iChoose strategy of continuous improvement.

- This person will manage the project budget and use an online management tool to track progress to goals
- The project manager will provide "leadership and direction to the advisory team.

An Advisory Committee will be formed consisting of representatives from each school, the asst. supt. of research and accountability, and the coordinator of data analysis and program evaluation.

- The committee will meet quarterly and receive interim reports and will recommend improvements to program operations
- The committee will receive summative reports at the end of each year.

Although there are three components to the strategy for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process, the narrative is unclear how it will measure progress. For this to be a high-quality plan, goals and a timeline for each activity needed to be included. This lack results in a score of 12.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)**5****3****(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:**

There are strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. An independent evaluator is being selected who will provide communication and feedback on the proposal. Results will be shared regularly with the advisory committee, district leadership, teachers, staff and the Board of Education. Communication will also be with all external stakeholders in a variety of reports and presentations. The Office of Public Information and Community Engagement will be responsible for communicating results and outcomes of the project via various media.

The communication plan includes a variety of strategies to ensure communication and engagement of the proposal. It is unclear how the approach stated will create the need to make revisions and adjustments. It is unclear that anyone other than the independent evaluator will be monitoring the proposal and for this reason a score of 3 was given.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)**5****2****(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:**

The primary performance measure for the iChoose schools will be the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO). Baseline data is determined to be 2010/2011 data. Goals for each measure are disaggregated and are aimed to decrease non-proficient students by half in six years.

Although there are performance measures for grade 3, there are none included for grades K - 2. There is no data included for the charts that include Highly Effective and Effective Teachers and Principals because that baseline data for this indicator will be included in 2012-2013. There are no socio-emotional indicators included but the district has a plan, EWTS, that identifies key warning signs that indicate when a student is off-track to graduate and is likely to drop out. Each principal will receive data that will identify and target academic, social and behavioral resources to those exhibiting risk factors. This narrative does not include timelines or goals.

This section is weak because it does not include a rationale behind the selection of each indicator. It provides goals but does not provide information tailored to its plan and theory of action. It does not state how it will review and improve the measure of time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress. It includes participation rates in each grade span. For these reasons, the section was given a score of 2.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The external evaluator and the data analysts will be tasked to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities. The narrative addresses questions such as which activities are creating increases in student achievement, and the cost effectiveness of the programs. The system is set up to continuously evaluate its effectiveness.

This section lists three components of the iChoose schools but does not address how each will be evaluated and modified. It does not address professional development and the use of time. Because of this, it is a weak response and received a score of 2.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	8
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>The budget identifies all funds that will support the project and seems reasonable and sufficient.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an overall budget summary table and a project summary list. • Each component of the proposal has a budget summary and is referenced in the proposal <p>Although each table is labeled, there is no thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities. All budget subparts have reference to parts of the proposal.</p> <p>The budget sheets identify the purchase of one-time investments and those that are annual. There is no focus on strategies that will sustain this project.</p> <p>The lack of rationale that is thoughtful and lack of strategies to sustain the project brought the score down to 8.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>I could not find documentation to support the sustainability of project goals so therefore assigned a score of 0.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	5
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments: <p>The applicant proposes to integrate public or private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools' resources by providing additional student and family supports to schools that address the social, emotional, or behavioral needs of the participating students.</p> <p>A partnership exists with the East Durham Children's Initiative (EDCI) which provides a continuum of cradle-to-college services for all children and families in East Durham and will offer comprehensive, coordinated, and wrap around services for the iChoose schools.</p> <p>This will include a Parent Advocacy Program that iChoose is funding for the targeted schools. The Parent Advocates will focus on communication between parent and schools, building strong home environments and promoting access to resources. This focus aligns with the proposal and also contains target goals for the 2013-14 school year.</p> <p>An on-line data base will be implemented to track individual student and family outcomes that will include grades, attendance and behavior. The data will be used to inform and improve program development of time. Ongoing needs assessments will also be used to determine family and student needs. The narrative does not address special needs students but the data available from the district should be able to address this.</p> <p>Parent Advocates serve as a link between the parent, teacher, and student. It focuses on empowering parents to become advocates for the child's success.</p> <p>The narrative lacks an explanation on how this partnership would build the capacity of the staff at the participating schools.</p> <p>The performance measures for the participating schools are included.</p> <p>This is receiving a low average score of 5 because one section of the questions (#5) are not included.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments: <p>This plan coherently and comprehensively addresses how it will create learning environments that are designed to improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies , tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college and career-ready standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adoption of the common core and essential standards, along with the supports described in the proposal will personalize the learning environment and create assessments and data that will be used to inform instruction. • The supports through the data systems will increase the effectiveness of educators • The personalized learning and the rigor of the instruction and assessment data will decrease the achievement gap and increase the graduation rates. 		

Total	210	142
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0329NC-3 for Dr. Eric J. Becoats

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Durham Public Schools describe a comprehensive vision set to provide all students with opportunities to be successful in college and the workplace.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Durham Public Schools is committed to the adoption of the core curriculum and NC Essential standards which offer district students an opportunity to reach their potential in college and the workforce. Assessments have been designed to align with state standards, instruction and core objectives. The implementation of School Improvement Teams and technology initiatives are designed to inform teachers and leadership of areas of strength and weaknesses. An online platform provides assessment data, links between course content and standards, and student profiles. This innovative system is available to educators, parents, and students. Project iChoose is the initiative that is implemented in the nine schools. Eight elementary and middle schools feed into one high school. The District's goal is to transform the learning environment in to learning experiences. Teaching and Learning environments will be personalized to ensure all students achieve at high standards. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Common Core of English/Language Arts details what students must know and be able to do by providing clear objectives. The N.C.'s Framework for Change includes indicators that measure performance and growth The Measures of Student Learning /Common Exams serves adopted statewide assessments measuring teacher effectiveness. The District developed a comprehensive framework that aligns curriculum, instruction, and assessments. If funded, the District will implement an Instructional Improvement System which is an online platform to provide a variety of data. Human Resources oversee reform efforts related to implementation of teacher and principal evaluation processes. <p>Upon review of the total description of the reform vision and DPS's updated data plan, the District will implement the Instructional Improvement Plan as part of Project iChoose. This system will have the elements that will provide equity for teachers, parents and students to ensure access of work samples, instructional data, formative and summative data, and assessment strategies. Based on the comprehensive and coherent vision of DPS, the applicant scored high as it builds on its work of the core educational assurance areas to provide equity for all students. This reviewer acknowledges that Durham Public Schools has articulated a clear and credible approach to its reform vision.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>DPS, Project iChoose, chose to focus on one feeder pattern area of nine schools K-12 to set its achievable goals. The listed schools met the eligibility requirements of the completion for Race to the Top. The applicant included charts and graphs to document demographic factors that identify low income families, high need students, and educators participating in this initiative. As Project iChoose transforms the learning environment, educators will provide instruction and support tailored to meet the needs of each student.</p>		

- a. The selected high school was one of the District's lowest performing schools due to its four-year graduation and dropout rates.
- b. Several of the elementary schools were among the lowest performing schools in the state.
- c. Approximately 5,500 students are participating meeting the guide lines of the proposal as noted on the charts.
- d. The District has expanded upon lessons learned from previous initiatives.

The applicant received a (9) based on meeting the criteria, However, some charts and headers were not readable.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	9
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(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

A(3)The plan of action received support from the Board of Education and the community. DPS is supported by a community that desires all students to become world-class citizens.

- a. The BOE developed policies and goals to implement a bold continuous improvement process that provides training for staff related to measurable strategies as set in the Strategic Plan. The applicant describes components that provide for the implementation of the reform effort as itemized below:
 - a. Plan-Do-Check-Act a continuous improvement process;
 - b. The District's Program Strategist provides training for measurable strategies outlined in the strategic plan; and,
 - c. DPS project charters include scope, deliverables, stakeholders, and timelines
- b. Area superintendents and program specialists oversee professional development activities of the Common Core, standards, assessments, informed technology, research and accountability. The list of initiative below are critical to the provision of successful implementation of the RtT reform plan.
 - a. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment which provides professional development support and oversight for teachers and administrations to implement the common core, standards, measures of student learning and assessments.
 - b. Information Technology Instructional Improvement System
 - c. Human Resources and Talent Development which will oversee reforms related to teacher and administrator evaluation tools.
 - d. Project iChoose includes five goals related to college and work readiness, increase in highly effective teachers and administrators, positive school climate, and enhancement of school libraries.

Durham Public Schools recognizes the need to have total support from its Board of Education, staff, and community . Based on this articulated and well defined plan of action to achieve district-wide change, DPS scored high in this section in its design and use of teachers and administrators across all schools as a logical plan to improve student outcomes.

At present, to insure success the District chose one feeder pattern K-12 for the project. Based on the success of Project iChoose they will implement their reform vision across the District. This is evidence of their ability to scale up across the District. The reviewer finds this step-wise approach is a prudent mechanism for district-wide implementation.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The DPS presents an ambitious plan (Project iChoose) that states all students will be ready to enter college or the workforce among graduation. The District has implemented a number of initiatives to create a world-class district.

- a. The strategic plan details academic indicators for measuring student success.
- b. With the alignment of the Vision and Strategic plan and other initiatives, the DPS appropriately describes a plan that is achievable and exceeds state requirements.
- c. The "Listening and Learning Tour" opportunities provide input from community groups which demonstrated sound practice to craft strategic plan goals and theoretical structures that are embraced and understood by the community.
- d. The Theory of Action codifies the BOE's plan for transformation.
- e. Design for Accelerated Progress divides schools into tiers based on performance
- f. Area Support Team Model to provide direct and specific support to schools

- g. Assessment for Learning is part of the strategic plan as a model to improve student achievement at all levels across content areas.

The District has effectively described at least nine major reform initiatives that the reviewer believes are likely to improve student learning and performance. It is essential to provide direct area support, a strategic plan that is aligned with the vision and other initiatives, and a comprehensive assessment strategies. By including parent and community input it keeps the vision public and provides increased equity for all students especially the targeted population.

The narrative section and reports of data indicates that the District moving toward scaling up and creating a world-class district by addressing performance and summative assessments, decreased achievement gaps through personalized learning reforms in an attempt to improve graduation rates and decrease the achievement gaps as described in the attached tables. It even depicts the increased college enrollment of African-American and Hispanic students.

The reviewer's only concern is the extent to which teachers and building administrators can articulate how all the initiatives connect.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	10
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments: District's data analysis chart (Table B1) offers reading and mathematics proficiency progress to date. Additionally, the applicant received comprehensive funding from the state to support its initiatives in its lowest performing schools to enhance student achievement, provided professional development, offered mechanisms for community and family engagement, provided technical support and rewarded staff.		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> District goals have met at the 3rd, 5th, 8th, end-of-grade scores, test composites at the high schools and the four-year cohort graduation rates. The state received RtT funding, in turn, the District dedicated its funding <ol style="list-style-type: none"> to hire, retain, and reward great teachers and administrators support North Carolina's Career and College Initiative to implement 1:1 iPad solution –technology integration tool for several Project iChoose schools The Data Dashboard and the School Scorecards are tools that are available to students, educators, and parents to provide up-to-date student achievement data on assessments, and on teacher working conditions. Annual superintendent updates, website information, and individual School Improvement Plans are posted as well as parents receive paper copies. <p>While the applicant outlined its efforts to raise student achievement and close the gap among subgroups to inform Race to the Top about its methods to inform and improve transparency, overall it moderately explained its record of success. The District did not share its success story regarding the four year increase of grade level scores and graduation rates. In addition there is little evidence of strategies being employed with the targeted groups of students.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments: The narrative states that the District provides a high level of transparency in processes, practices, and investments. DPS did refer to The U. S. Bureau in another section and a website for government finances and information. Unfortunately the applicant did not make detailed information in B2 (a-d) in the proposal. I could not find the appendix or table sections. The District received a low score.		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

DPS has demonstrated evidence of successful conditions and autonomy connected to state, local and regulatory requirements.

State statute authorized the Cooperative Initiative High School program which joined with the State Board of Education to establish a cooperative innovative high school program. DPS established two cooperative innovative high schools. The State Board of Education expanded general statute to include schools operating on community college or university campuses. The District established the Middle College High School. In addition, the state authorized 36 high schools to be restructured to implement Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math programs. DPS implemented three high schools. The District met the conditions and sufficient autonomy under statutory and regulatory requirements to implement personalized learning environments. The applicant received a high rating for this section.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)**10****8****(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:**

Stakeholder support is evidenced by the applicant.

- a. According to a teacher survey, teachers regarded online systems training as positive. The professional development opportunity provided teachers with digital tools to provide teamwork explore interests and promote personalization.
- b. Union support is evidenced by the support letters included in the application.
- c. Letters signed by principals describe their support
- d. The "Listening and Learning" Tour led throughout the city, captured input from over 4,400 community members. Based on the needs, strengths, and weaknesses of the District, the BOE established four strategic plan goals.

Based on positive survey feedback, community support, and letters of support, all criteria was met and a high score was awarded. The high score is recommended because the district provides a detailed account as to how teachers, principals and external stakeholders (i.e., unions, etc.) were engaged in the feedback loop by including surveys and letters.

There is no evidence of plans to address the training and familiarization of new teachers. In many school districts, there is the potential for startup programs to collapse upon a change in administrators and/or participating school personnel. At the District level, this issue is even more prominent. Therefore, the score for this area is an eight.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)**5****1****(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:**

DPS offers a list of strategies that customizes learning opportunities to accommodate students for whom the comprehensive high school is not effective. These strategies include

- a. Personalized Learning Strategies-
- b. Personal Education Plans
- c. Student Assistance Program
- d. Secondary Intervention Team
- e. Futures for Kids
- f. Intervention plans may include, but not limited to coaching, mentoring, summer school and extended day opportunities.
- g. Accelerated plans may include but not limited to magnet and Montessori Programs, International Baccalaureate and Gifted and Talented placement. Additionally, Homeless Liaison Services, Wellness Centers, social work and guidance services are available in schools.

The applicant did not respond to of all criteria related to this section. While it offers extensive programs to address needs and gaps, it did not align its key goals, activities, timeline, deliverables and responsible parties with supporting evidence to address the logic behind the reform proposal. For this section the applicant scored low.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	18
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Durham's theory for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment is framed around Richard Elmore's theory of the instructional core. Their focus is on the interaction between teacher, student, and content in the classroom. DPS has infused their theory with several highlighted initiatives listed below</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Common Core and the Essential Standards in K-12 mathematics and English/Language Arts. 2. The Accountability and Curriculum Reform Effort which adopted the N.C. Essential Standards in all other subjects. 3. The Teaching and Assessment Framework which is aligned to written, taught, and tested curricula of the new state standards. <p>DPS has adopted an approach to learning that empowers all learners in an age appropriate manner. Their approach is rooted in their Cybrary initiative. The Cybrary is the mechanism that they will utilize to enable students, parents and teachers to focus on individualized learning and to track and manage their learning. The Cybrary is inclusive and available and accessible to all students, teachers and parents. The Cybrary is an interactive technology tool that enables students, parents and teachers to intuitively access learning opportunities consistent with the students interest beyond the walls of the school. It enables a student to master critical academic content and deepen their learning experiences in areas of their academic interest in a manner that is tailored to the diverse reading levels of students. The Cybrary gives DPS students teachers and parents a tool to challenge each student to master subject matter of their choosing and to become college and career ready from K -12. The Cybrary concept is the primary strength of their proposal and a reason that this section is scored high due to its student, parent and teacher directed learning opportunities that can be measured to determine each students progress.</p> <p>In addition to the DPS Cybraries, they have plans to include supports for first-generation college students. They also have a programs for literacy, elementary summer programs, transitional learning in six elementary schools and a Summer Bridge Academy directed at middle schools to provide support for students to ensure they understand how to use tools in order to track and manage their learning.</p> <p>The new standards will continue to be the framework for the "core" of instruction for the District and Project iChoose. The Instructional Improvement System will be the platform for Project iChoose. This online system will provide parents, students, and teachers with access to data and resources pertaining to instruction, assessments, and career and college goals. The digital library will permit students, teachers, and parents to retrieve a variety of resources including real-life project based learning experiences. Accordingly, students will be empowered to be critical and independent thinkers at all reading levels. The applicant has formulated a comprehensive plan for improving learning and teaching based on meeting the guidelines for this section. Their theory, instructional core, is the interaction between teacher, student and content of the classroom. Teachers will be expected to engage in professional learning communities to collaboratively design meaningful and relevant learning experiences that will result in the mastery of educational core areas for students and teachers.</p> <p>This combined theoretical approach empowers all students to set and accomplish academic goals. Students will have access and exposure to deepen their learning as independent thinkers. Personalized learning opportunities are in place for K-12 students. So that students continue to deepen their learning, the District offers specialized opportunities during the summer and school year. The approach is innovative and achievable and is rated high in this section.</p> <p>The weakness in this section is that DPS did not provide examples as to how the Cybrary measures student achievement.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	18
<p>(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District describes its plan as high quality for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment for all students in support of graduating college-and career-ready.</p> <p>The professional development opportunities are customized, designed to enhance knowledge and skills of teachers, standards-based and aligned to the NCPI professional development standards. One example of customized training is the District designed Culturally Responsive Schools to address the needs of gleaners in diverse cultural contexts.</p>		

PD training for teachers to adapt content and instruction is embedded in the tool Teaching and Assessment for Learning. Teachers are trained on strategies that optimize the strengths, interests, and optimal learning styles of all students. This approach enables the District to identify instructional and professional development needs, ensure mastery of skills, and accelerate systems that ensure the success of all students.

Teachers are grouped in Professional Learning Communities to ensure that educators are committed to working collaboratively through the process of collective inquiry and action research.

The Teacher Evaluation System is defined a “ the work of the teacher results in acceptable, measurable progress for students based on established performance...”. The state has adopted definitions on effective and highly effective teachers that include student growth. The rating tool is a tiered set of standards. Every standard is independently rated to help target professional development areas of need. For teachers not meeting one or more standards a timeline for achieving proficiency are set.

Professional Learning Communities will focus on four key questions that are designed for educators to work collaboratively through a process of inquiry. This ongoing process of collective inquiry and action research provides opportunities for student to archive in personalized learning environments.

The data analysts within Project iChoose will serve as additional members to the PLC teachers to assist teachers disaggregate data by subgroups and course objectives.

DPS has agreed that all participating teachers will engage in professional learning communities. The reviewer understands that the District has adopted North Carolina professional development standards for all educators. DPS's professional development plan will promote collaborative collective learning. The evidence shows that DPS aligned content and instruction opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks. The District has met the criteria that addresses measurement of student progress by using an effective instructional teaching and assessment framework with their pilot project. In addition, the reviewer finds that the District provides highly effective systems that improve and enhance the practice and effectiveness of teachers and principals.

As mentioned earlier, the District has identified a framework that enables teachers to use instructional strategies that ensure all students learn based on their individual needs. In addition, the reviewer finds that the District has identified high quality content and aligned instruction and assessment tools that will allow students meet college and career ready graduation requirements.

DPS in conjunction with the state utilizes a high quality evaluation tool that rates teachers based on the comparison with student growth. The reviewer finds that the intent of evaluation tool is to enhance teacher performance by use of the North Carolina Professional Standards . The tool is designed to provide teachers with necessary feedback in order for teachers to perform well in meeting student needs. It also provides teachers with the necessary feedback to be successful and rated accordingly. In turn, like the teacher evaluation system, the Principal Evaluation System expects principals to contribute to the academic success of its students. The approach to rating principals also raises the bar as to what principals should know and be able to contribute to the success of the students.

The reviewer accepts the Teaching and Learning section as extensive and of high quality meeting the criteria for improving learning and teaching. Teachers and principals have opportunities to receive rigorous ongoing training in a variety of types and settings to develop personalized learning environments for students. However, there is no indication that the District has a plan for hard-to-staff schools or how to staff specific subjects and specialty areas this is seen as a weakness.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	11

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The Durham Public Schools infrastructure

- A. The district office is led by the superintendent, a chief of staff, four chief officers who are responsible for human resources, communications, finance, and operations.
- B. Two assistant superintendents lead research and accountability and student, family, and community services. Also assigned to central office are three area superintendents that are accountable for elementary, middle, and high schools.
- C. School-based teams are responsible for delivery of programs and services. Graduation coaches, academic facilitators, social workers academically and intellectually gifted coordinators, exceptional children coordinators, limited-English proficiency coordinators and psychologists all support giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards and to provide learning resources at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students.

While the District has demonstrated that it has thoughtfully organized its central office and support personel to provide a comprehensive instructure which includes the provision of social and learning resources and insturctional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students. However, there is no indication that schools have sufficient automony in developing school calendars, staffing models, and for school personnel decisions. While applicant did not address opportunities for students to progress and earn credits based on demonstrated mastery. Additionally, the reviewer could not find evidence that students are given opportunities to demonstrate mastery at multiple times or in multiple ways.

Although the District has met many of the criteria, this reviewer has given them a medium score because of the weaknesses noted above.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

4

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

As reported by the District, The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) provides online training for the Instructional Improvement System. The IIS online platform will provide students, parents, and educators access to information and resources they need to ensure that every student in the state has the capability to personalize their leaning environment.

- a. The infrastructure will include a five module system of
 - a. Instruction and learning support - provides educators tools and resources
 - b. Assessments - tools to create, align, deliver, and manage assessments with formative assessment strategies to facilitate the daily monitoring of student progress
 - c. Data analysis and reports – provide students, parents, and educators with customized dashboards and reporting tools
 - d. Educator evaluation and professional development – provides educators with a system to complete an educator evaluation, register, participate, and track their professional development
 - e. Profiles and work samples – provide students and educators with profile pages and space to save standard aligned samples of their work.
- b. The state will provide online training. Information technology and instructional staff will be trained by the State Department of Public Instruction. Upon completion, the technology and instructional group will be responsible for providing professional development to district and school-level administrators, teachers, parents, and students. They are very much dependent upon the state
- c. The reviewer cannot determine the extent to which can export their information in an open data format. Although the DPS says it will, it has not been implemented and the Stated has not funded their district.
- d. DPS plans for interoperable systems but they are not at a point of implementation.

The applicant did not indicate when the online Instructional Improvement System (ISS) will be available to the school district. Therefore, the major weakness is that the District did not share an operational plan. They do have technical support as an ongoing component and have developed technology standards for every school. Overall this section received a medium rating because the overarching technology tool they will use has not been developed and tested.

DPS is awaiting its deployment and they have no timeframe for implementation. This is considered as a major weakness to student, parent and teacher access. Until the system is developed and implemented it is impossible to determine whether there is an appropriate level of technical support. Although they plan to utilize a media and technology advisory committee to determine access needs in each schools media center, they are dependent upon on State leadership and funding to advance their ISS. These are serious impediments to implementation of an ISS.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	11
(E)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>The District has recognized that the plan may require adjustments and revisions during implantation. In order to ensure implementation of a rigorous continuous improvement process that provides timely and regular feedback during and after the term of the grant, the District has indicated that it will hire</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> An independent evaluator with years of experience in education research and program evaluation will analyze the data. The evaluator will provide <ol style="list-style-type: none"> formative and summative feedback over the full-term of the grant quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis a process to focus on how the project is being implemented the services it delivers functions it performs and on documenting the decisions made in executing the project. The evaluator will be responsible for all reports, including the annual performance report required by the U.S. Department of Education. A project manager will be hired to provide oversight for Project iChoose. DPS will hire eight data analysts to assist the external evaluator with collection of student, teacher, school volunteer, and parent data and monitor the implementation of the Personalized Education Plans. An advisory committee will share responsibility with the project manager for planning, executing, and monitoring, and reporting activities. <p>The District plans to hire other staff to provide timely and regular feedback on progress toward meeting project goals is appropriate. The positions include an evaluator, project manager and data analysts teams to implement the continuous improvement process. The District does not clearly state how it will monitor, measure and publicly share information the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top. This section receives a medium rating.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	3
(E)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>Strategies for ongoing feasible communication and engagement include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Development of all reports required by the U.S. Department of Education Results will be shared with Project iChoose advisory committee, district leadership, teachers, and the BOE 		

- c. Communication will extend to DPS' external stakeholders including parents
- d. Updates will be made via the media, Super Annual Update, district website, cable TV and feature articles published in the local paper.

While the District identified all internal and external stakeholder groups to be part of receiving ongoing communication and engagement it does not make clear what approach it will use to demonstrate continuous improvement of its plan. The applicant received a medium rating on this section.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
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(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has included multiple charts and summaries that demonstrate that the District can meet feasible achievement rates of performance.

- a. Based on a state waiver granted by the U.S. Department of Education, the District will use Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) approved by the state as the primary performance measure. AMO targets based 2010-11 data have been disaggregate by federally reported subgroups for reading and mathematics
 - i. Participation rate 95% in the end-of-grade tests for reading comprehension
 - ii. Participation rate 95% in the end-of-grade tests for mathematics
 - iii. 95% proficiency rate in end-of-year grade tests of reading
 - iv. 95% proficiency rate in end-of-year grade tests of mathematics
 - v. Other Academic Indicators: Attendance for schools
- b. AMOs for high school students (Grade 10)
 - i. Participation rate of 95% in end-of-course test of English II
 - ii. Participation rate of 95% in end-of-course test of Algebra I
 - iii. Proficiency rate of 95% in end-of-course test of English II
 - iv. Proficiency rate of 95% in end-of-course test of Algebra I
 - v. Other Academic Indicator: Five year graduation rates
- c. In addition to the AMOs, the District details The Early Warning Tracking System which is designed to identify key warnings for off-tracked high school students.
- d. Through a secure portal principals will receive student names, the at-risk indicators, student demographics their at-risk points and target academic, social, ad behavioral resources.

The applicant has included at least 12 performance measures. The charts outline proposed performance measures based on the applicant's target population. However, there is no indication that the District has decided how it will review and improve the measures over time. Nor, does the section provide evidence of how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative information.

The District received a medium score because it did not provide a rationale for selecting its performance measures. Overall the performance measures seemed reasonable but they did not provide a rationale for all performance measures. They only state that the measures were based on 2010 - 2011 annual measureable objectives.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5
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(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Based on information reported by DPS, it has developed an effective plan to evaluate Project iChoose.

- a. The external evaluator will use a cost-effective evaluation of Project iChoose. Questions
 - a. Which activities yield cost-effectiveness and demonstrate increase in student achievement?

- b. Does the evaluation consider per-pupil cost for each phase of the program and provide positive long-term impact on students?
- b. A Cybrary will be created in each of the targeted schools.
 - a. Students will access comprehensive digital resources
 - b. Teachers monitor student use.
- c. The District will hire eight data analysts to be assigned to area superintendents to assist the targeted schools with data analysis, data interpretation, data-driven instruction, and professional development.
- d. Summer Academies are to assist students and families and focus on literacy
 - a. Transition from elementary to middle school
 - b. Decrease summer learning loss
 - c. Target the most at-risk students in small classroom settings.
 - d. The summer program will focus on literacy. The program will be implemented at all three grade levels.

The investments for this effort are considerable given their need to equip participating schools with Cyberaries, to hire a professional evaluator to measure successes and employ and train eight data analyst for each school and assign two trained teachers to each of six elementary schools to create transitional classrooms. The District has elected to employ an array of strategies that justify its investment. In combination, these strategies will enable the DPS to aggressively plan, implement and evaluate each component. The independent evaluator is a key to the success of its plan and demonstrates their desire for continuous quality improvement. Based on their plans, in the aggregate, including the modification of school structures, the deployment of new technology and use of leadership teams, the evaluator believes they have satisfied the criteria and earned a high score in this section.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments: <p>The budget and narrative statement of the applicant passes the reasonability test and details categorical funding expectations but does not specify the other sources of funding (i.e., external state, local or foundation support, etc.). The budget clearly delineates one-time funding for technology for nine schools over a four year period under the project name of Transition Classes. All other funds appear to be for on-going operations.</p> <p>All proposed funding sources appear to be grant related and does not adequately address long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments (i.e., summer program for the reading academy, and teacher enrichment, etc.).</p> <p>The project budget narrative details how all components will be funded but the summary related to other sources of funding is not evident other than to say "local resources." Indirect cost are identified as approved by the State Educational Agency. This section has been rated as high medium.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments: <p>This does not appear in the District's application template. It is not clear to the reviewer as to whether the District received this section.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

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	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The District has demonstrated that it is partnering with a strong community-based non-profit organization. The East Durham Children's Initiative (EDCI). EDCI is committed to changing outcomes and expectations for children and communities in one of the most at-risk neighborhoods in Durham. Their vision, borrowed from the highly successful Harlem Children's Zone, aims to provide a continuum of cradle-to college services for all children and families living in this neighborhood. Presently, The East Durham Initiative supports three DPS schools, one elementary, middle and high school. Together EDCI and over 20 organizations offer comprehensive wrap around services designed to augment DPS efforts at schools target through Project iChoose.</p> <p>The Parent Advocate Program is an initiative founded on research supporting positive relationships between increased parent engagement and student achievement. If funded, Project iChoose will provide Parent Advocates for the included schools. Using data from the Early Warning Tracking System will identify the work with Parent Advocates. The four desired long-term goals are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Informing parents 2. Ensuring effective parent and school communication 3. Building supportive home environments 4. Promoting access to community services. <p>The District presently works collaboratively with their evaluation team to develop and implement an online database system to track student and family outcomes for the EDCI. Parent Advocates (PA) record information regarding student grades, attendance, and behavior; along with other quality assurance measures and feedback from parents and school partners it will be used to inform and improve program development over the three year expansion and post-grant period. The plan is to expand the program to other schools within the project. This strategy will ensure PAs are able to provide support for most high-need students and families at the school. Additionally, a priority is to hire Bilingual candidates with graduate level social work or education degrees. In 2016-17 school year, the EDCI will formally review outcome data to make the necessary modifications and to expand the PA program to selected schools. The initiative will also develop and implement protocols, training manuals, and evaluation plans for each school.</p> <p>PAs serve as a link between parent, teacher, and student. Parent Advocates will formally assess each family's social and academic needs and strengths. By providing family support along with interventions EDCI strives to impact student attendance, behavior, and academic performance over time. The EDCI Parent Advocate Program targets four areas.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting informed parents 2. Facilitating parent-to-school communication 3. Developing supportive home environments 4. Increasing parent access to community resources <p>For four years the East Durham Children's Initiative (EDCI) has supported children and youth in the community to help alleviate the impact of poverty by providing resources and personnel to support the District's plan to improve the academic environment. The evidence suggest that the partnership will continue throughout this project. EDCI has demonstrated that they have the capacity to assist the District with the implementation of Parent Advocates to work with high risk students and families. This partnership will augment and support students in making academic progress and improve graduation rates.</p> <p>The District has also identified at least 10 population-level desired results. Their results, in my opinion, are typical of indicators that are generally associated with low income populations. The reviewer finds that the District has hired an independent evaluator and eight data analysts r each school to work with the evaluator and to analyze the indicators and enable the District to target its resources to areas of need. Additionally, they will have the capacity to scale-up as budgets dictate.</p> <p>The partnership is currently working with the school system to integrate education and social services. It is clear to the reviewer that the elements related to the criteria of the section have been defined by the District. Based on the information shared, the applicant has developed and partnered with a long standing community-based partner that represents an all-inclusive support system. Therefore, the applicant has been rated high on this section.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The Durham Public School District has designed a coherent and comprehensive plan of action to address how to build on the core of instruction to create learning environments where all students upon graduation are college and career-ready. They addressed strategic goals in a concrete manner.</p> <p>Their vision, built upon the four core educational assurance areas. Instruction, assessment, and standards have been aligned to personalize student learning and enable every child to achieve academic mastery. For the at-risk students the District implemented a project that has been successful the past four years. The tests scores document demonstrate decrease of achievement gaps within subgroups. If funded, the District will build upon its work to develop personalized learning opportunities for students in one feeder pattern K-12. The district's request for funding will enhance and strengthen project enabling it to grow more schools.</p> <p>Professional opportunities for staff will be focused, PD opportunities for students and parents will be added, and technology will be upgraded and expanded. The partnership with the East Durham Children's Initiative is representative of school and community working together to support children in preparation of college and careers. This applicant has met the criteria for this section.</p>		

Total	210	152
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